

Monongah Revisited: Sources, Body Parts, and Ethnography

Joseph L. Tropea

Yarns and Records

Stories serve provincial knowledge in the absence of examined history. Legends, told with the passion of moral drama, little nuance, and words absent etymology, construct history. Story-words, without origins or transformations, cast events in fixed ways: splattered pieces of gristle, tissue, and bone became “body” in moving from mine to surface—but “body,” not tissue, forged the history and narrative of the Monongah disaster. Heaps of mixed and charred carnage, formed for bereavement and burial and marked with names, eluded classification and infuriated newly widowed women. Still, their failed protests over the illusion did little to alter the burial of “unidentified”—but named—“bodies.” Indeed, the widows’ dissents, too, helped forge the body narrative.¹ Those early efforts at administrative and emotional closure fed hysteria, frustrated sorrow, aggravated social divides, and fostered beliefs of multiplied dead. Mixed and unidentified body parts, given names and placed in boxes or left unnamed in a trench, created ghost miners, additional bodies to whom the shattered flesh belonged. Archived files of “unidentified”—but named—remains offered vindication for the protesting widows, not evidence of multiplied dead. The formation of splattered gristle, tissues, and bones into an appropriate mass for burial, and, when graveside rituals were completed, the placement of surplus carnage in a trench, nurtured legend, divided community, and muddled history. This article demonstrates how a narrative on body and body-part removal focused bases of error in legends, misled research, and misinformed events across an ocean.

Error-ridden tales constitute knowledge for the greatest mining disaster in United States history. On the morning of December 6, 1907, explosions within Fairmont Coal Company’s interconnected mines six and eight in Monongah, West Virginia, reportedly killed 362 persons, 361 working men and boys, including 171 Italians, and one errant Polish child.² The town, not the company, became the signifier of disaster in Italy and the US. Still, stories that echoed in the author’s childhood gave some dignity to the modest community, especially tales with empathy for miners and antipathy for

WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY, New Series, vol. 7, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 63–92

Correspondence to Joseph Tropea: e-mail: tropea@gwmail.gwu.edu

Giovanni Basile

Monongah Mines Relief Committee.					
House No. 172	Giovanni Basile (John Basile)		Case No. 172		
Check No.	Name of Deceased		For Relief		
Nationality Italian	Church R. C.	Domestic state Kansas			
Birth Place St. Giovanni in Leone (Ganga)	Age 20	Yes to U.S. Yes to Monongah			
Date of Funeral	Place of Burial	Grave No.	Marque No.		
Dependents	Relationship	Name	Age	Address	
	Wife	Europeana Angelli	20		

Giuseppe Belcastro

Monongah Mines Relief Committee.					
House No. 172	Giuseppe Belcastro (Joe Belcastro)		Case No. 172		
Check No.	Name of Deceased		For Relief		
Nationality Italian	Church R. C.	Domestic state Kansas			
Birth Place St. Giovanni in Leone (Ganga)	Age 20	Yes to U.S. Yes to Monongah			
Date of Funeral	Place of Burial	Grave No.	Marque No.		
Dependents	Relationship	Name	Age	Address	

Monongah Mines Relief Committee records of two individuals, "Unidentified," but here named; courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU Libraries, Monongah Mines Relief Committee collection.

coal companies. Over the years, misled lore was affirmed by articles, books, newspapers, memorials, churches, documentaries, ceremonies, dissertations, grants, ballads, plays, road signs, interviews, and internet postings, which reverberated across an ocean into Italy.³ Elaborations and embellishments were applied to the missing spots in Monongah's history and primary sources were not used—or not used well. Also, the distorting powers of repeated lore, acquiescent listeners, uncritical media, and sways of labor, ethnicity, and religion strengthened weak knowing. This institutionalized and expanding lore, careless with sources and method, continues to abuse the past. This article, through the use of primary sources and the recognition of ethnography's place, offers a counter-narrative to recast this great disaster in United States and West Virginia history.

Unexamined, or poorly examined, records were available for decades in West Virginia.⁴ Photographs, documents, and legislative hearings represent, enumerate, and describe the disaster, but left uncovered or unqualified by serious inquiry, did not serve knowledge well.⁵ Out-of-state collections of primary sources remained, and remain, largely unexamined.⁶ Still, records include daunting obstacles that frustrate research; for a major example, Monongah's miners were overwhelmingly foreign born and not US citizens at the time of the 1907 explosions. Their identifications become puzzling in records of Fairmont Coal Company and the Monongah Mines Relief Committee (MMRC), the organization that administered relief for miners' dependents after the explosions. Publication of the West Virginia State legislative hearings is even worse: it was no small task to identify the immigrant miners who survived the explosions and gave testimony, which was achieved only with the aid of other sources. Even Our Lady of Pompeii, the Italian church extant in Monongah at the time of the disaster, offers its share of recorded

error.⁷ While interpreters were used after the explosions to help company agents canvass miners' homes and MMRC personnel to interview and authenticate dependents, they were not well versed in all dialects or English and contributed to misleading information. Foreign miners were given multiple names, some Anglicized, some faux ethnic, and the ethnicities of non-Italian foreigners were confused with the empires from which they emigrated or fled. Many errors survive not only in archival collections and public hearings but also in birth and death records, marriage certificates, divorce proceedings, church records, gravestones, public monuments, published works, and family histories. Still, while critical examination of domestic records is necessary, it is not sufficient. Visits to the birth towns of Italian miners, who constituted the largest number of foreign dead, provided other primary-source materials from civil and religious institutions; these trips enabled comparison with US records and interviews with children of deceased Monongah miners, which contributed information not found in the records.⁸

Comparative use of primary sources identified error-production but not error-reproduction. Ethnography helps explain the reproduction of error in much of Monongah's lore and in its elaborations in Italy. Social-cultural factors that produced, as well as reproduced, errors are distinguished, and along with primary sources, inform a narrative challenging a long-standing, even cherished, legend. A seminal story in Monongah lore, responsible to primary sources, is recast to challenge moral exclusivity, as well as the multiplication of dead miners.

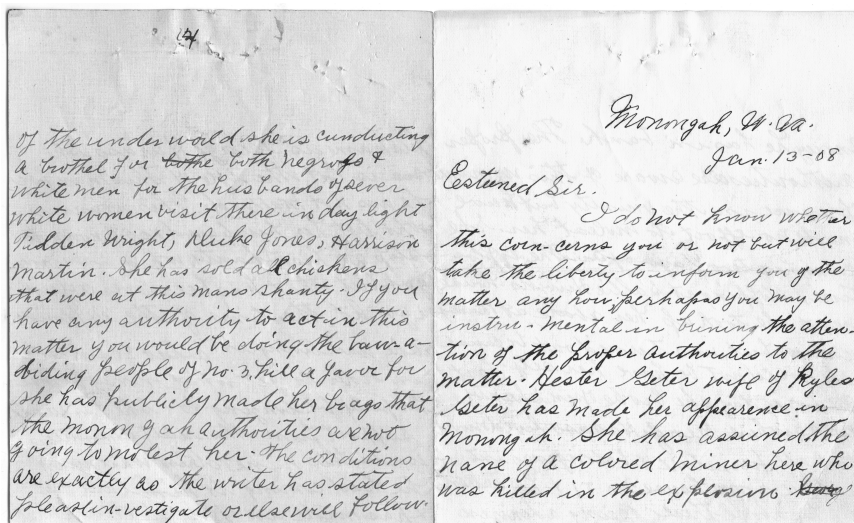
This article documents a range of problems and some uneven exposition results. The article first shows how relief efforts after the disaster multiplied the numbers of those left destitute by the explosions—part of a genre of numerical error in rendering the disaster's effects. In turn, sources and analyses are used to challenge claims of unreported dead miners and boys—claims that signify barriers to recasting Monongah's history and to aiding families seeking or honoring kin. The article illustrates how persisting claims, unexamined events, and errors are ethnographically rooted, from the long-standing sole-survivor myth, to theft of relief monies in Italy, mismarked gravestones, frustrated homage, Anglicized identity, and name-changes. In addition, this article recasts the received narrative on body and body-part removal to show the importance of ethnography in accounting for errors in Monongah's history. These various illustrations suggest how strongly the threads of error are woven, which this article only begins to untangle. Unfortunately, the presence of dead miners and the consequent public anguish drove body removal, identification, and burial actions that left strong memories, which may tighten, not untangle, in the absence of sound research.

Opportunities and Opportunists

Scholars may discount ill-founded knowledge claims in many ways: through method, evidence, critical review, discourse, and transparency. On the other hand, power, belief, ego, interest, rudimentary knowledge, and charlatanry can sustain ill-founded claims for a long time. Conflicting claims over the numbers of miners who died in Monongah are usually framed within the rhetoric of miner-company conflict. However, there are other sources of hyperbole that confuse Monongah's history. As is well known, the mine explosions, in their early aftermath, provided opportunities for the press to embellish as well as report. Less recognized is the organization of relief, the collection and distribution of monies for miners' dependents, which also offered opportunities for exaggeration. Righteous and villainous entrepreneurs responded to prospects for resources, whose realization was enhanced by deception and embellishment in Italy as well as Monongah. Opportunities were seized by foreign and domestic actors, by the politically weak and the influential, by common thieves and moral entrepreneurs, and by a pretend wife and an elected official garnering public sympathy, political credibility, and financial resources—Monongah's Mayor, W. H. Moore.

Both of the last two deceptions and embellishments serviced gain, but the former became little more than an historical curio, a charming charade, while the latter achieved the status of historical fact. An unsigned letter, dated January 13, 1908, identifies a woman who "came here two days after the explosion" and "assumed the name of a colored miner here who was killed in the explosion. . . . She is not the wife of this man for he was not married." This accused culprit: "broke open Shanty No. 80 . . . moved out all of the furniture & belongings . . . is conducting a brothel . . . has sold all the chickens."⁹ The letter's author requested the matter be brought to the attention of the "proper authorities," which seems to have had the desired effect: the accused woman failed in her act as the miner's wife, for the MMRC did not list any beneficiary for this miner.¹⁰ While of little consequence, this failed scam illustrates the kinds of opportunities the disaster produced, many of which will likely not be discovered. In contrast, Mayor Moore's embellishments shaped core "facts" in Monongah's history.

The mayor sent a letter to *The Evening Times*, addressing the "good people of Cumberland," Maryland, which was printed in the town's newspaper on December 13, 1907. In the letter, Moore claimed, "We bare have half enough now to take care of the 400 women and 1000 children who are homeless and without anyone to care for them. Women are now working day and night to take care of these people. . . . We earnestly hope . . . that the good people



Letter challenging the identity of a supposed wife; courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU Libraries, Monongah Mines Relief Committee collection.

of Cumberland will respond promptly . . . for money, clothing and food.”¹¹ There is little doubt, given the scale of the disaster, that Monongah women were “working day and night.” Yet, the mayor provided questionable numbers. Many—likely most—of the women and children were in Europe.¹² Still, the mayor’s embellishment became one of the many uncorroborated indicators of inflated death and destitution, which haunted Monongah’s history, from local lore to US government publications.¹³

Records and Relief

Exaggerated claims of destitution did not go unnoticed. Mayor Moore’s embellished letter of appeal may not, alone, have prompted the visit by representatives of Andrew Carnegie’s Hero Fund, who arrived in Fairmont within a week of the explosion. Nonetheless, the fund’s immediate concerns were directly related to questions of facts, solicitation, organization, representativeness, and transparency in administering relief. Among these issues, Mr. Wilmot, the primary agent of the fund, listed: “the exact result of the disaster”; “the number of dependents left without means of support”; “how much money had already been subscribed”; “what efforts had been made to obtain funds for the relief of sufferers”; “upon what basis the funds subscribed would be distributed.”¹⁴ Not surprisingly, Mayor Moore, chairman of the Monongah Relief Committee, “resented the formation of the Fairmont Committee to

take charge of the relief work for Monongah”—a move threatened by the Carnegie Fund visitors. However, Mayor Moore agreed to a consolidated MMRC, likely related to his appointment as its chairman.¹⁵ Over the course of a few days, from December 13th through 15th, the two local committees from Monongah and Fairmont were consolidated into the MMRC, and with the insistence of the Fund, were made more religiously inclusive; the logistics and administration for collecting and distributing relief were established; and a letter of solicitation, under the auspices of the MMRC, was written by Wilmot, which he provided to the Associated Press upon his return to Pittsburgh. This letter diluted Moore’s earlier claim of destitution and became the more often cited, but nonetheless incorrect, source for the number of Monongah’s dependent widows and children: 250 and 1,000, respectively.¹⁶ Ironically, it was Wilmot’s intercession that not only produced greater administrative rigor, accountability, and transparency in relief efforts but also resulted in records that undercut figures used in the national solicitation.

Archival records contain a letter by the MMRC auditor, dated December 1, 1908, almost a year after the explosion, which have figures for dependents very different from those of the Moore or Wilmot solicitations: 216 widows, 475 children (under 16), and 31 children born after the explosion.¹⁷ While Wilmot reduced the number of the dependents from Moore’s solicitation, he nonetheless forwarded to the Associated Press for national solicitation a figure exceeding by almost 530 the auditor’s total number for women and children. Enumerations in letters of solicitation reverberated through the years as indicators of historic conditions, while more accurate records were available in the archives. It is useful to remember the magnitude of error over dependent widows and children in reviewing evidence on claims of unreported dead miners and boys. These provide the most deafening, heartfelt, and misleading of claims in Monongah’s folklore and history.

False Claims and Troubled Records

It may be understandable that in the early aftermath of the Monongah explosions the reported numbers of dead miners kept changing, almost arbitrarily. It is neither understandable nor excusable if these early numerical gyrations are granted validity or reliability. No scholar would use uncorroborated headlines, subsequent to a major disaster, to indicate historical—as opposed to hysterical—conditions. Yet, use of exaggerated headlines and unsubstantiated texts inform Monongah’s history.¹⁸ Headlines implicate evidence in claims of unreported dead miners.¹⁹ Problems of newspapers’ omissions or commissions are left unexposed; for example, the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, December 8, 1907,

December 1st, 1908.

Mrs. A. J. Ruckman,
Monongah, W. Va.

Dear Madam:-

At the request of Col. T. G. Price, I send you the following data concerning the families of the victims of the Monongah Mines Disaster, December 6th, 1907:

Number of Men Killed.		
Americans	74	
" (Colored)	11	
Italians	170	
Hungarians	53	
Austrians	16	
Russians	30	
Greeks	<u>5</u>	359

Number of Widows 216.

Number of Children, under 16 years 475.

Number of Children born since the disaster 31.

Very respectfully, Auditor.

Auditor's Letter; courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU Libraries, Monongah Mines Relief Committee collection.

provided a list of dead miners, which included four men who survived. On the following day, December 9, that same newspaper provided an addendum of 19 dead miners, which included two men from the previous day's list.²⁰ Counting living miners as dead and dead miners twice does not inspire confidence or sound history. Still, conclusions based on such "data" became integral parts of Monongah's constructed history.

Using newspaper quotes to indicate the number of dead miners, from the Associated Press or other authorless sources, is another misleading practice. This may be even more pernicious than headlines: when quoted persons are identified, a greater level of authenticity is suggested, if verifiable cites are provided.²¹ Still, without critical examination or corroboration—especially, with conflicting information from other sources—the use of such testimony becomes more than suspect as reliable information. Indeed, the many quotes on the number of dead assume the character of gossip: "so-and-so said this, and so-and-so said that, and so-and-so said this and that." For example:

Malone reportedly said 578; Malone reportedly said 400, possibly 425; Paul reportedly said 390; Gaskill reportedly said 487; Lichtenstien reportedly said Gaskill said 425 to 550; the priests reportedly said 410; Ruckman testified 185 to 190 (in each mine).²² Because credibility may be granted to company men, mine inspectors, and priests, their knowledge claims must come under even greater scrutiny; likewise with testimonies of former miners garnered from oral histories. To examine these claims correctly, the presence or absence of some core distinctions must be noted in evaluating knowledge claims from quotes or testimony.

The distinction between “employed” and “working” does not always inform quotes or their use. The numbers of workers employed by Fairmont Coal and the numbers of men working in mines 6 and 8 on the morning of December 6, 1907, are not the same. It is the claims of numbers and identities of persons actually working in the mines the morning of December 6, 1907 that demand corroboration. Such numbers cannot be assumed from payroll accounts. On the other hand, a firm distinction is made—but empirically unsubstantiated—between persons on the payroll records, which included “contract workers,” and persons who were working in the mines, “off the books.”²³ The latter, off-the-book persons, with the exception of a Polish boy, have not been corroborated for Monongah.²⁴ This lack of corroboration is likely related to conflating “contract workers” with miners sharing check numbers.²⁵ The use of another miner’s check does not mean absence on the payroll—“off the books”—or “contract.” Lastly, coal company variations in labor practices, including hiring, procedures for access to the mines, and work locations, need to be recognized. The procedures a mining company used to hire a score of workers were very different procedures from those used by a company hiring hundreds. When making claims of unreported dead Monongah miners, one cannot assume another’s company’s practices apply to Fairmont Coal. At Fairmont Coal, access to the mines and to the location for work involved pre-hiring procedures, followed by registration on the rolls; these procedures are illustrated in the records of two Italians, Pietro Frateiacovo and Basilio Pellillo, who were underground but had not yet completed the hiring process with the mine foreman when they died in the December 6th explosions.²⁶ The range of estimated dead in newspapers, roughly from 400 to 600, excluding the 956 figure with the elusive source, defies an exercise in validation. Still, cites of credible authorities, with more precisely quoted figures, is what deserves attention, while attending to the distinctions just mentioned.²⁷

The quote purported to be the most authentic, and one that illustrates some of the problems just discussed, is from Fairmont Coal’s General Manager Lee L. Malone. While not all newspapers credited the Associated

Mine Number 6		Mine Number 8	
24	No 156	22	No 231
2	Joe Kella (Bos.)	2	Phil Raymond
2	Italian	3	Italian
4	No 6, but didn't work the	4	No 8, but didn't work all else
5	9 Benders		
	4 Kella, names: 1) Joe Kella, 2) Mike Mapple, 3) Mike		
	(as) John Ferrell, 4) Mike Kella		
6	Donnauld & John Mingle, mine children		
7	No bodies found.		

Log books recording names of dead and those absent from mine on December 6, 1907; courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU Libraries, Monongah Mines Relief Committee collection.

Press (AP) for their articles containing the quote of “Leo (sic) L. Malone,” this one-time quote, from this one-source release, was reproduced in a number of newspapers.²⁸ Still, the quote is treated as an instance of authenticity, not only because of its distribution, but also because of its seemingly early, on-the-spot testimony, as well as Malone’s managerial position. Malone’s early estimate of 478 dead is used as evidence of the MMRC’s underreporting of dead miners—especially when Malone is quoted as saying this number “did not include fully 100 trappers, mule drivers, pumpers and boys who are not under the check system.”²⁹ There are some contextual problems with the AP release, beyond its misspelling of Malone’s name. Some reports, using the AP release, suggest Malone’s morning check-off numbers were provided as much as a day and a half after the fact, though the phrasing and publication date thwart clarification. Malone’s information from check-offs (tags) mounted on boards, reportedly obliterated by the morning explosions, raises other questions of time- and data-based knowledge. Further, Malone could not have known the number of miners who stayed home and were out of the mines on the morning of December 6, 1907—a survey of the miners’ houses had not yet been conducted, and the numbers of miners absent would have been inflated by the effects of celebrating *Festa di Santo Nicola*.³⁰ In addition, Malone was general manager, with responsibility for men working both in and out of the mines, which included mine number 5, as well as 6 and 8. Mine foremen “commanded the underground” and had much more knowledge of men “working the faces”; indeed, it would be difficult for a general manager to be aware of “face specifics.”³¹ So, it is difficult to know precisely what information Malone had when he was quoted, assuming he was quoted correctly. However, more critical than noting contextual problems with the AP release is the availability of records to assess Malone’s estimate of 478

of December 6, 1907, a belief partially confirmed by the presence of twelve-year-olds on the MMRC list of the reported dead. However, the belief that additional, or younger, boys were working in the mines that morning has not been substantiated. Evidence challenges this core belief. As with numbers of supposedly unreported dead miners—a core element of Monongah folklore—evidence must be persuasive to convince of the non-presence of additional working boys. Yet, research cannot investigate abstracted, ephemeral, or phantom “boys”; its scope is limited to real boys. A research question is of this order: whose sons were available to work in the Monongah mines on December 6, 1907? This question can be answered, at least for a good portion of Monongah’s reported dead miners.

A total of 171 Italians were reported to have died in the explosions, over 47 percent of the reported dead. If there were unreported boys working in the mines that December morning, it is near certain, statistically, that some of those boys would have been sons of Italian miners. However, such certainty vanishes with data. Of the 171 reported dead Italian men, 109 were single, had no sons, or only a pregnant wife at the time of the explosions. The remaining 62 men had sons (or sons and daughters). Of these 62 men, 28 had sons, aged 8 or above. Of these 28, 20 had their families in Italy. The remaining 8 Italian miners had sons in Monongah, who could have been working in the mines at the time of the explosions.³⁴ Yet, the house canvass, conducted after the explosions, shows all sons of these 8 miners to be alive.³⁵ To some, who long subscribed, empathetically, to Monongah’s folklore of unreported dead boys, this finding may be disturbing. However, it is more disturbing to hold and propagate uncorroborated belief in unreported dead miners and boys.

Unknown and Unreported Dead

To believe that men and boys died in the mines, were left unreported, and remained unknown is to suggest mining families and communities did not know who they lost or did not tell. This suggestion is damning to mining families and mining communities in general and to Monongah and its families in particular; for its large proportion of Italians, this suggestion is close to cultural sacrilege. How could mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, wives, children, cousins, neighbors, and house “boss men” remain silent about the ones they lost? How could or would a small town, under national scrutiny, lose so many unreported men and boys and mask the loss? It may be hypothesized that groups of unattached miners, living in isolation, unbeknown by others, died in the mines and were left unreported. Such a hypothesized scenario approximated an actual incident but does not validate unreported miners.

Five unattached Greek men squatted in Fairmont Coal Company house number 210, unbeknownst to the company, and died in the mine explosions. While missed on the first canvass, they were recorded subsequently and are on MMRC’s list of the reported dead.³⁶ Additionally, when the author queried a Monongah audience of many elderly persons their collective memory could not provide one family name of an unreported miner or boy.³⁷ It may be difficult to abolish long-held beliefs, but it is unforgivable if folklore bestows on mining families an unwarranted and undeserved ignorance or alienation. Families who suffered the Monongah disaster need not be implicated by a lore that treats them as dumb and silent.

As in the case of abstracted and ephemeral “dead boys,” research cannot investigate “unreported dead miners.” The reportedly unreported dead need to have been real persons and identified; they need to be named. It is unreasonable—even absurd—to expect mining families and communities to identify the dead whose death claims they never made. Persons who make claims of unreported dead miners must identify them. The book, *Monongah*, meets this expectation; it names 8 men claimed to have died in Monongah but left unreported: 6 Italians and 2 Americans. The 6 Italians are Bossilo Pillelo, Petro Frediro, Giovanni Farcse, Sabastino Zeoli, Sabastiano De-Maria, and Giuseppe D’uva, and the 2 Americans are Fred Rogers and David James, Jr.³⁸ Following is a comparison of *Monongah’s* 6 unreported Italians and 6 of the reported Italians on the MMRC list.

Table 1
Unreported and Reported Italians

<i>Monongah’s</i> Unreported Italians	MMRC Reported Italians
Bossilo Pillelo	Basilio Pellillo
Petro Frediro	Pietro Frateiacovo
Giovanni Farcse	Giovanni Farese
Sabastino Zeoli	Sebastiano Zeoli
Sabastiano De-Maria	Sebastiano DiMaria
Giuseppe D’uva	Giuseppe D’Uva

In comparing these two lists, it should be clear what happened: Monongah pronunciations guided phonetic transcriptions, which resulted in the deletion or replacement of vowels and consonants, the shortening of a confusing surname, the insertion of a hyphen, or not capitalizing a capital letter. These errors illustrate what was suggested previously: when the coal company or MMRC noted Italian names, they recorded confusion, not reliable information, on which to base claims, especially of “unreported” dead Italian miners.

Monongah's failed claim of the unreported Italian dead illustrates how records of foreign miners provide research journeys of narrow and circuitous lanes, complete with "dead ends." Still, records yield information that may be substantiated, if critical and comparative pathways are taken. Yet, the problem of language and the need for comparative records does not hold for the two reportedly unreported American miners: Fred Rogers and David James, Jr. Because of this, the "evidence" is even more wrenching. In the case of Rogers, *Monongah*'s text states, "Fred Rogers is not included in the Relief Committees [sic] list, the Company list, or the Coroner's list."³⁹ Yet, surprisingly, *Monongah* provides a "reprint" list of the MMRC's reported dead, on which Fred Rogers appears.⁴⁰ As troubling as the contradictory claims on Rogers is the claim for the other American. *Monongah* states, "David James, Jr., 25, son of Mr. and Mrs. David James, Sr., of Arnold was one of the victims of the Monongah mine disaster."⁴¹ That is, he should have been reported by the MMRC. Here, too, there are problems: the supporting footnote has no connection to David James, Jr.; the footnote and text disagree on the newspaper's date for the quote; the cited newspaper, *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, the Pennsylvania and West Virginia death records, *Family Search*, local funeral homes, and the archivist for the *Valley News Dispatch* (Arnold) offer no support for the death of a David James, Jr.

Casual treatment of cites and sources adds time, costs, and unnecessary obstacles to serious research. Such practices belie scholarly trust and provide unsubstantiated knowledge to those untrained, uncritical, or only versed in lore. In their turn, folklorists, less concerned with issues of method and corroboration, are freer to fiddle with facts; for example, the book, *Coal Dust on the Fiddle*, reports, "In the Monongah, West Virginia disaster of 1907, eleven-year-old 'Devil' Johnny Keney was counted among the dead."⁴² Johnny Keney ("Devil" or not), is not on the list of MMRC's reported dead. However disturbing or curious these knowledge-claims may be to scholars, they represent a genre of casual knowing that mocks the past and numbs the present. A few more illustrations are provided.

Survivors, Thieves, Homage, and Smith

One telling example is the decades-long celebration of the Monongah disaster's sole survivor, Peter Urban. Fed by faulty lore, bolstered by 50th and 100th year commemorations and publications, and joined by a credulous community, generations were instilled with the belief that only one man, underground at the time of the explosions, survived. The photograph of Peter Urban in mining gear and its silhouette became common features of public exhibits

and a retrospective testimonial to community gullibility. Both photograph and silhouette still grace testimonies of the uninformed.⁴³ Signaling Urban as the sole survivor was mostly, and maybe necessarily, posthumous.⁴⁴ It was a heralding by default: records of public hearings were either not read or not understood. The same may be said of a road sign, long posted on US 19, now standing outside of Monongah's town hall. The road sign, seemingly ignored in the making of the Peter Urban myth, reads: "On the 6th of Dec. 1907 361 coal miners, many of them from countries far across the sea, perished under these hills in the worst mining disaster of our nation. The four who escaped died of injuries."⁴⁵ The Urban myth and the road sign collide on survivor facts, one or four. Neither is correct. Misled lore may be faulted for the Urban myth, while the road sign implicates officialdom. Public officials permitted the sign's placement to promulgate facts that had already been contradicted in hearings which published the survivors' testimony—all five of them.⁴⁶

West Virginia memory, officialdom, research, and records are all implicated in the tortured heralding of a man, whose early death preempted his likely disclaimer of being the sole survivor. Peter Urban gave public testimony in the same hearings as the four other survivors: Orazio DePetris and son, Angelo, and Donato D'Amico and son, Leonardo. There would have been a sixth survivor, but the intense smoke and fire exiting the escape hole did not allow Orazio to grasp his son, Felice.⁴⁷ In a January 1908 letter from Mr. DeShields to Mayor Moore, the lawyer wrote "Donato Domico (sic) . . . is injured and his wife is in need of shoes and necessities as well as himself."⁴⁸ The letter may, in some way, implicate the road sign's testimony that injury was the cause of death for those who escaped. This, too, was invalidated by a visit to the DePetris home in Pescocostanza in Abruzzo. There, Anna, great granddaughter of Orazio and granddaughter of Angelo, showed a metal-plate photograph of Orazio and told of the survival of both men. Anna, who never heard of Monongah, was meeting with the author in a house Orazio likely purchased with the help of MMRC monies.⁴⁹

Whether through absence of or a distortion of information on survivors, *Monongah's* author became befuddled in his search for the unreported dead. The hearings incorrectly recorded the names of the Italian survivors and muddled their testimony in a number of different ways; for example, Orazio is identified as "Crazic" and Donato D'Amico as "Dan Dominico." Other kinds of errors compounded the confusion over the identification of the survivors; for example, the hearings record "Crazic" as identifying Donato D'Amico as his "brother," and Donato's son, Leonardo, as "Felix."⁵⁰ Also, the hearings credit the testimony of Peter Urban to "Peter Rosebeig."⁵¹ The range and depth of error and confusion in the records discouraged the

Louis Patch, 151st Body Removed

133	Lamorris	8
134	Pom. Lohrers	8X
135	Unkn	0
136	L.A. Moore	8X
137	Ch. Marshall	8X
138	Don. Morse	chc 268 6X
139	Unkn	0
140	Felix Barand	0
141	Ces. Buleto	0 8X
142	Tom. Bator	chc 91 6
143	Mike Pety	6X
144	Unkn	0
145	Sam. Hewitt	6X
146	Geo. Bonasa	0
147	Al. Buckline	8X
148	Patsy Augustine	8X
149	Geo. Janett	8X
150	Unkn	0
151	Louis Patch	x 8X
152	Thos. Killeen	8X
153	Mich. DiCostantino	27 8X
154	Mich. Molara	27 8X

Luigi Pace in Civitella Roveto, Italy

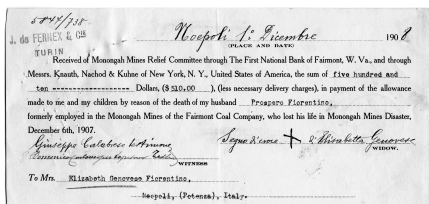


Left: “Louie Patch” listed as 151st body removed from Monongah mines; Right: Luigi Antonio Pace in Civitella Roveto, Italy, after Monongah mine disaster; courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU Libraries, Monongah Mines Relief Committee collection. Photograph courtesy of Emanuele Petricca and Sestilia DiCostantino, Civitello Roveto.

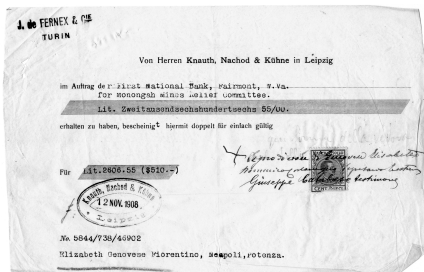
construction of accurate history, and of course, offered no ballast to skewed memory or lore.

The most egregious error may be that concerning Louis Patch, an Italian who died with an English name. Subsequent to the explosion, the Fairmont Coal Company, the MMRC, the Italian priest, and the Italian government, as well as persons with whom he lived, could not provide an identity for this man. Louis Patch was reported to be the 151st body removed from the mines and buried in row E, gravesite number 2 in the Italian cemetery—though there is a contradiction in the MMRC records about the gravesite—and assumed his place among the 171 Italians who reportedly died in Monongah.⁵² Americans recorded what they heard when an Italian provided his name (*nome*) and surname (*cognome*). What was recorded became part of the church, as well as the company, record, though what was recorded was but a tenuous link to the person’s legal Italian *nome* and *cognome*. Still, the “phonetic trail” seemed the best way to discover Louis’s Italian identity. The American pronunciation of “Patch” is a rough approximation of the pronunciation of the Italian “Pace.” Also, the *nome*, Luigi, was commonly replaced by Louis. Ellis Island records yielded core information: the arrival of a Luigi Pace, prior to the 1907 Monongah disaster; a *paese* (town) of origin, Civitella Roveto, the origin of other dead Italian Monongah miners; and the *nome* and *cognome* of

Multi-lingual Financial Instrument



Receipt



Elisabetta's "X"; courtesy of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU Libraries, Monongah Mines Relief Committee collection.

an uncle whose US location was the destination of this particular Luigi Pace. A visit to the *comune* (local administration) of Civitella Roveto in April 2013 resulted in a match on all counts; the uncle, Antonio Raeffale Persia, to whom Luigi was headed from Ellis Island, was the brother of his mother, Filomena Persia. Louis Patch was, indeed, Luigi Antonio Pace, born in Civitella Roveto on November 24, 1884. After over 105 years, the real identity of a man listed among the Monongah dead was secured. Qualifying this discovery was another one: Luigi Antonio Pace did not die in Monongah. He returned to Civitella Roveto, married there on December 31, 1908, and died on January 1, 1955. Who or what was removed as the 151st body and placed in row E, number 2—or elsewhere in the Italian cemetery?

Americans illiterate in Italian approximated the nonexistent English of Italian women, recipients of Monongah monies, who were able only to make their mark—"X" (*croce*).⁵³ Complicating the problems of illiteracy for the women in Italy was the transaction route and information on the financial instrument delivered to their home towns (*paesi*): First National Bank of Fairmont, to Knauth, Nachod, and Kuhne in New York, to Leipzig, Germany, then dispersal by courier to towns in Italy, where the women resided. This instrument, which required the endorsement of illiterate widows, contained German addresses, German and English phrases, and Italian names.⁵⁴ It was easy to exploit an illiterate woman who signed her "X" on a financial instrument.

In one case, the lira value, eventually received by a son of a Monongah miner, in Morcone, in the mountains of Campania, was not equal to the deposit plus interest that should have accrued to him when he achieved majority status.⁵⁵ In another case, no money was received by a widow for herself and her six children, living on the island of Ponza. The widow's daughter was incredulous when the author informed her that Americans provided money for

her mother, likely sufficient for the purchase of a home. To support her claim that her mother received no lire, she showed caves in which she, her siblings, and mother lived subsequent to her father's death. Filomena Sandolo, an elderly woman living on the island, not only corroborated the story of suspected theft, but implicated the culprit.⁵⁶ Monongah's 1907 disaster echoes stories in records and memory, with whispers of maleficence, as well as tenderness, in the US and abroad. These stories require research to be heard, lest they be drowned out by unfitting facts and easy lore.

In Monongah's Mount Calvary Cemetery the gravestones of two twelve-year-old boys sit side by side. The birth years and death days are the same: 1895 and December 1907—victims of the Monongah explosions. The weathered gravestone is for "Ruggero Disipio," written in Italian; the other is for "Ruggerio Disito," in English. This information and proximity of the gravestones suggest the possibility of misguided homage. Interviews and a review of the records corroborate this mistake and provide a story entailing much confusion. In May 1901, a miner died in a Farmington, West Virginia, mine explosion.⁵⁷ In the report of that explosion, Raffaele Di Sipio is listed as Ralph Desipio—in a table of "Non-Fatalities." Yet, in the text of the report, Farfello Tisipio is said to be "there lying dead."⁵⁸ One miner, with three different names, was reported to have died and survived in the same explosion. This diabolically incompetent report is almost matched by the records of Raffaele's son, Ruggero. Ruggero was working in mine number 8 when he was killed in the 1907 Monongah explosions.⁵⁹ Ruggero's MMRC file identifies him with seven names: Ruggero Di Sipio, Ruggero De Sipio, Ruygero Di Sipio, Ruygero Di Sypio, Tony Decepio, Tony Di Sipio, Tony Di Salvo, and Tony *Desito*.⁶⁰ Though Ruggero's mother remarried, she told her second family adoring stories of Ruggero, who helped support her as a working boy. These stories had deep effects in her second family. One daughter spoke fondly of her deceased half-brother, and a granddaughter even requested that her son, Sam, place a gravestone to honor Ruggero.⁶¹ Sam, a half family and four generations removed, not familiar with the Italian language and misled by his mother's recall, was responsible for the stone to honor Ruggero. Sam had no authentic knowledge as a guide. Indeed, both gravestones are dedicated to the same boy. A story of love, respect, and homage that should have been straightforward was sidetracked by the twisting, error-strewn paths of convoluted names and memories. While Sam's homage was not precise, it was touchingly approximate, which will never be said for the families of some miners who died elsewhere in West Virginia.

Monongah's massive disaster, with newspapers, crowds, national notoriety, formal relief efforts, and legislative hearings, affect collections of records. In contrast, most fatal mining accidents leave barely a social ripple. Mining

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, COUNTY OF MARION, SS:

BIRTH CERTIFICATE

IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF THE COUNTY COMMISSION OF MARION COUNTY

I, JANICE COSCO, CLERK OF THE COUNTY COMMISSION, IN THE COUNTY AND STATE AFORESAID, IT BEING AN OFFICE OF RECORD, AND HAVING A SEAL, DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE RECORDS IN MY OFFICE SHOW THAT

Phelix Massa, Jr. WAS BORN IN MARION COUNTY AND STATE (Monongah)

OF WEST VIRGINIA, ON THE 21st DAY OF March, 1908, AND THAT THE PARENTS NAMES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

FATHER'S NAME Phelix Massa

MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME Annie Prelot

AS SHOWN BY THE CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH RETURNED BY Jas. A. Riedy, Phys., AND

RECORDED IN BIRTH RECORD NO. 3 AT PAGE 104 CERTIFICATE FILED 1908

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I HAVE HEREUNTO AFFIXED MY SIGNATURE AND OFFICIAL SEAL AT FAIRMONT, WEST VIRGINIA, THIS 28th DAY OF February, 1984

Janice Cosco, CLERK

Felice Maselli; courtesy of Clerk's Office, Marion County, West Virginia.

deaths, elsewhere, are noted with little information. The quest of some families to know their own will begins and ends with where they started: vague memories. For example, an Italian was injured on July 20, 1906, by a descending cage in the Cranberry Mine, Raleigh County, and died one month later on August 20, 1906; he is identified as "Italian No. 47." In 1907, the same year as the Monongah explosions, another Italian died on May 27 from a fall of slate in mine No. 5 (H. & S.), Kanawha County; he is identified as "Italian No. 14." Monongah miners, who died en masse, may become known, while other families will be denied knowledge of their own because they died singly or in small lots, like numbers "14" and "47."⁶²

Language miscues not only frustrate research and family knowledge but also leave strong imprints on legal documents and humor. The former, recorded and legitimized by various state authorities, are permanently etched in West Virginia law; the latter, long offering respite from the dominance of Monongah's horrors, survives in memories of persons whose numbers are fast dwindling. Legal examples abound in the Monongah area, some common, such as Anglicized names, and others unique to Fairmont Coal Company. In the first is a family whose surname and grocery store have been long familiar in the Monongah area: DeMary. This surname is an Anglicized version of De Maria, a family whose Italian origins are in the Campania region. More contorted transformations can be found; an example is a birth certificate from

Marion County, West Virginia. The certificate, for the March 1908 birth of a miner's son, Felice Maselli, records him as Phelix Massa, Jr. and his mother, Antonia Prioletta, as Annie Prelot.⁶³ When the author interviewed Felice in Italy in 1983, West Virginia seemed such a strange world away, where, in law, he was Phelix Massa Jr. Whether by default (Massa) or acquiescence (DeMary), name changes were made legal and part of state records.

The story of another, even stranger, name change remained partially formed in two memories, until an interview, by chance, led to its completion and substantiation. An Italian coal miner who died in Monongah was known as Smith. The MMRC records provided the American name, Smith, and the Italian name, Colantuono, but not a story to explain this unlikely transformation. John DeMary knew the story but not the miner's name, while the author had published the records but not the story. Colantuono, while waiting in line to be hired by the coal company, watched the men ahead of him. He saw Italians failing to get work while the Americans succeeded. When Colantuono's turn came, he was asked his name, to which he responded "Smith," thus earning him the job and the name.⁶⁴ Transformations of Italian names by the coal company rival those wrought by Ellis Island, if not in extent, at least in peculiarity:

Table 2
Italian and Fairmont Coal Surnames and Names

Pasquale Adducchio	Patsy Toots
Giuseppe D'Uva	Joe Dewey
Francesco Gaetani	Tony Frank
Pasquale Iannacone	Jose Yanko
Francesco Guarascio	Tony Frank
Pietroangelo Gioia	Peter Joy
Michele D'Onofrio	Mike Dunoff
Antonio Ricciuto	Tony Richwood
Leonardo Veltri	Lunard Dewett ⁶⁵

The effects of language incompetence, like the Smith story, inform much humor in West Virginia lore. While Colantuono died in the mines, his story, as well as stories of other name changes, provides ballast to memories of horror and death—unlike the dominant narrative, which amplifies horror and death and muffles inclusive remembrance.

Body Parts

While this article identifies some sources and implications of error in lore, the problem requires more than correcting inattentive methods, deficient cites, questionable facts, loose assertions, or wrong conclusions, especially when a dominant legend is embedded in culture, community, and institutions. There is an almost faith-like belief, instilled in the author's childhood that over 500 miners died in the Monongah explosions. Songs and the press affirm or multiple that number. Continuing pontifications, flawed publications, social acquiescence, and political orchestrations suggest scholarly research will have difficulty in converting the faithful.⁶⁶ The challenge may be better met by confronting gospel with narrative, not legend with method. A narrative, consistent with records and more inclusive of Monongah's community may be more effective than "proof." Still, the bottom line is to challenge ill-founded lore.

For a century, the over-500 belief has been expressed by many storytellers, but no one has more personified, dignified, and institutionalized that belief than the late Father Everett Briggs. His story and its ethnographic place are important to understand the power and persistence of lore. Father Briggs arrived in Monongah in December 1956 and became immersed in local lore.⁶⁷ Stories of the Monongah disaster and Briggs's concerns over the lack of public remembrance of its victims motivated many of his good deeds. Among his many heart-felt actions, he organized and directed 50th anniversary commemorations of the disaster; built a nursing home, dedicated to the Monongah miners, with an appropriate patron saint; and, by arguing the importance of women, inspired the Monongah Heroine Statue, which is placed across from Monongah's town hall. The West Virginia State Legislature recognized Father Briggs's contributions by naming a bridge over the West Fork River Father Everett Francis Briggs Bridge.⁶⁸ The late Father Briggs's dedication to the miners is without question. Unfortunately, the pivotal story he came to believe can be challenged.

A visit to Mount Calvary Cemetery, the location for post-explosion burials of Italian and Polish miners, made a deep impression on Father Briggs; there, he heard the story of unreported dead miners and was shown the unmarked place where they were buried. This experience convinced Father Briggs that over 500 miners died in the December 6, 1907 Monongah explosions. He propagated this belief, though he could not substantiate it.⁶⁹ When Father Briggs escorted persons to the cemetery, he repeated the story he was told and showed the unmarked burial site for the unreported miners. In 2003, the author provided information to and granted an interview in Washington, DC, with

	<u>"Miners" Died</u>	<u>Unknown</u>
1.	Gaskill, Supt Report:	487
2.	Malone, Supr Report:	578
3.	New York Times	564
4.	Zanesville Signal	500
5.	RR Employee (Briggs):	500
6.	Fr. Briggs Report:	500*
7.	Cunningham, Auditor:	352
8.	Baltimore Sun:	450
10.	Pittsburgh Despatch:	425
11.	Frs. D'Andrea-Lekston:	410
13.	Baltimore Sun (12/12):	392
14.	Al Ruckman Transcript:	375
15.	Coroner Report:	360 ***
16.	Relief Committee (Bank):	358
17.	Inquest Transcript (No. 64):	323
18.	Victor, Safety Inspector:	301**
9.	Ned Smith Fairmont Times:	429
12.	Pres. Watson's Report	406
* 342	"Miners" dead; 158 Unknowns (St. Barbara Pedestal)	
**	58 Unknown	
***	70 Unknown	
Total of above 18 estimates = 7710		
Divided by 18 = 428		
Exclude from scope of average: 578 and 301 = 879		
New Total: 683.10 divided by 18 =		
Divided by 500 - 380 = 120 unknowns.		

Briggs's Working Paper; courtesy of Father Everett Francis Briggs.

Italian journalists from *Gente d'Italia*, who then proceeded to Monongah to continue their investigation. There, they accompanied Father Briggs on a visit to the cemetery. They published a series of articles on Monongah, in which their tour with Father Briggs was also reported.⁷⁰ That series of publications provided a service to Italians by making them aware of a disaster that far exceeded the 1956 loss of Italian life in the mines in Marcinelle, Belgium, a disaster well known in Europe as well as Italy. This new awareness of Monongah and the pending approach of the explosions' centennial enticed Italians to write of the disaster. Given the limited time frame, poor literature, and lack of access to US archival holdings, it is understandable that incomplete and inaccurate writings were produced, which embellished and distorted the disaster and its effects in ways that surpassed indigenous Monongah lore. Stories of unreported

dead miners and boys and the cemetery with its unmarked burial site were provided to the Italians. There, Monongah's body narrative was cultivated with public pathos and mislead morality. It is important to frame an alternative, research-informed narrative.

Within a few days of the explosions, burials began for the first bodies—or body parts—recovered from both mine six and eight.⁷¹ The in-mine recovery was largely a native Protestant endeavor, while observation of above-surface conveyance was more foreign and Catholic.⁷² The language of body movement, management, and rationale was mainly English, while foreigners' observations were internalized in other tongues—without the benefit of rationale. They saw that the body parts moved were not intact or even recognizable. Their excruciating shock, fitful sorrows, and deepening fears were expressed in foreign dialects and unsettling dins.⁷³ They provided spectacles for observers and text for the press. Alien wails, expressions, and bearings exemplified Monongah's social-cultural divisions, which suffering could not lessen.

Anglo Saxons faced cold and daunting tasks, with horrid ambiguities.⁷⁴ Even if they were inclined, because they had other obligations and were English, they could not ameliorate unfamiliar Polish and Italian grief—could not offer remorse or explicate a humane logic to their actions. Black and white Protestants comprised a minority of the dead and were buried in a number of locations. Italian and Polish burials were concentrated, overwhelmingly, in a plot of Catholic land. Burial plots were dug in the December-mountain cold, with snow and slush blanketing men who worked and waited for the many assorted remains, carted in pine boxes, on horse-drawn carts. Conflicts over unidentifiable, but named, remains continued at the Catholic gravesite and over the years, but largely subsided with death claims.⁷⁵ A main support for the legends began with the continued appearance of decaying body parts.

History does not bear testimony to the anguish of middling managers or laborers of body movement or burial. The majority of death and suffering among immigrants; the linguistic, labor, ethnic, and religious divides; and the casual, even cruel, attitudes of mining officials all conspire to shade these men from an empathetic light. Still, these Protestant folks had to reconcile collective grief, public spectacle, alien anger, biological decay, labor exhaustion, and prerogatives of capital.⁷⁶ First, they confronted mixed body parts and assembled them as bodies for respect and burial. Then, post-burial body parts were confronted. What could be done with the remaining gristle, flesh, and bone when claims of death had been exhausted, when burials were completed, when Catholic-Protestant distinctions were absent in the remaining carnage? While ignoring or discarding body parts was an option, likely exercised by

the exhausted and jaundiced, only a modicum of humanity was required to suggest body parts needed more hallowed procedures. Where could surplus human carnage be placed? One option, maybe the only reasonable one, was in a trench in the Catholic cemetery.

Responsibility was largely on the Protestants to transform scattered and charred gristle, flesh, and bone into “body.” Suffering was largely foreign and Catholic. Grief and doubts focused a “body” narrative. Language was inadequate to communicate nuance or humanity in harried burial actions, or to articulate rationale in the deposits of post-burial parts, or to represent the goulash of gristle, tissue, and bone placed in a trench—the unmarked site of legend for “unreported” dead bodies. In lore’s moral drama, actors were type-cast in ethnic-religious-industrial roles with attributes assigned that might not have been in actuality; this made for more deaths than records would allow. Historical narrative must incorporate primary sources, the ethnographic casting of Monongah drama, and the pivotal importance of an unmarked burial place in Mount Calvary Catholic Cemetery—and distinguish between belief in “over 500” dead and its corroboration. While such a narrative may help explain a century-long ethnographic shaping of received wisdom, it may be eclipsed as provincial lore gives way to international performance. Monongah’s history has become an Italian affair.

While the new awareness of Monongah and the approach of the disaster’s centennial enticed Italians to write of the tragic event, limitations of time, faulty resources, and lack of access to American archival holdings produced incomplete and inaccurate writings.⁷⁷ By the year of the centennial, Monongah had become a public spectacle in Italy, with ministry sponsorship, events in Rome, village commemorations, publications, and regional politicians vying for Monongah credits—some of the latter even scolded for their antics in *Gente d’Italia*. In Monongah the centennial was dominated by an Italian presence, with local and regional Italian politicians, their Italian-American counterparts, and even a busload of Italian-Canadians, along with Italian-made and funded monuments, permanently placed in Monongah on the grounds of the cemetery and near the town hall. Such public orchestrations encouraged embellishments and overshadowed local tales, which, while flawed, were constrained within the bounds of a West Virginia imagination. Italian embellishments of Monongah misery seemed to lack judicious bounds: one of the participants, instrumental in orchestrating the Italian-Monongah centennial, inflated the “over-500 belief” to an “almost-900 belief” in the numbers of dead miners.⁷⁸

Ethnographic bases to Monongah’s errors and horrors found rebirth across an ocean, making for historical interest, political opportunism, and

continued perpetration of dubious knowledge. A commemorative spectacle for the 105th anniversary of the Monongah disaster, held in Campobasso, paraded some of the questionable facts and interpretations discussed in this article, including the Malone quote, the role of Italian working boys (*bambini*), unidentified miners, and an elaboration of the whimsical estimate of over 900 dead miners (*"il numero della vittime sembra superare il numero di 900"*).⁷⁹ This event was partially and ironically inspired by a newspaper report on the author's Monongah research, including the biography of a miner's widow.⁸⁰ The event proclaimed a Monongah heroine but provided an ill-founded, chauvinistic interpretation of her actions and reasserted Monongah legends and facts challenged by the author's reported research. The continuing and debilitating ethnographic influence on Monongah's history is now ensconced in Italian political pretense.⁸¹ A political class, known to have been arrogant and contemptuous of its emigrant poor, is now appropriating scholarly knowledge and publicly exhibiting its misapplication; such public spectacles testify to political pretension, not to the nature of the struggles and deaths of Italian immigrants. Scholars and others face a daunting task in confronting political opportunism, heavily invested in the future of Monongah's distorted past.

Concluding Comment

The story of Monongah was revisited to identify primary sources, show a range of errors and consequences, and through comparative method, ethnography, and analyses, to recast the facts and provide a more accountable narrative. The late, then Senator Matthew M. Neely, speaking on the floor of the United States Senate, in recalling his experience of the Monongah disaster as a young guardsman, said, "tents were soon filled with the lifeless bodies of ghastly men: there were bodies without arms; bodies without legs; bodies without heads; heads without bodies . . . scenes of horror . . . that earth has no language adequate to describe."⁸² "Body" did not describe what was found underground in the mines, but through requirements of civility, became the descriptor above ground. The body narrative justifiably prevailed in psyche and soul but has unfortunately misled history.

Notes

The author would like to thank Janet Salvati, Professor Emerita, Fairmont State University, Professor Richard Juliani, Villanova University, the staffs at the Center for Migration Studies, NYC, West Virginia and Regional History Collection, WVU, and Carnegie Hero Fund Commission Archives, Pittsburgh,

Pennsylvania. The article would have been an unsatisfied exercise without such people, their ethics, competence, and institutions.

- 1 Joseph L. Tropea, "Catterina DeCarlo Davia—A West Virginia Donkey," *Women's Studies* 42, no. 4 (April 2013): 375.
- 2 For discussion of the Polish boy, see "Monongah Mine Explosion in Marion County, December 6, 1907," *Report of Hearings before the Joint Select Committee of the Legislature of West Virginia Appointed under Substitute for House Concurrent Resolution No. 5 and House Joint Resolution No. 19 to Investigate the Cause of Mine Explosions Within the State and to Recommend Remedial Legislation Relating Thereto Together with the Preliminary and Final Reports* (Charleston, WV: Tribune Printing Co., 1909), 396.
- 3 Eugene Wolfe, "December 6, 1907: No Christmas at Monongah," *Goldenseal* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1993); Joseph L. Tropea, "Revisiting Monongah," *Appalachian Journal* 5, no. 4 (Summer 2008): 358–364; W. H. Moore, "Words Fail To Tell The Story Of Destruction At Monongah," *The Evening Times* (Cumberland, MD), December 13, 1907, 1; "Loss in Mines May Reach 564 Lives," *The New York Times*, December, 1907, 16; "Dead in Eastern Mine Horror Number Nearly 600," *Los Angeles Herald*, December 8, 1907, 1; "500 Miners, Entombed by Explosion, My be Dead," *The Weekly Sentinel* (Fort Wayne, IN), December 11, 1907, 1; *Centennial Remembrance: Monongah Mine Disaster*, Pleasant Valley, Marion County (WV), 2007; Alden Todd, "The Horror at Monongah," *United Mine Workers Journal* 68th Year, no. 23 (December 1, 1957); Luigi Rossi, *Monongah: L'Emigrazione Sepolta* (Stanghella, Padova: Linea AGS Edizioni, 2007); Bahar Gursel, "Friendship, Crisis, and Estrangement: U.S.-Italian relations, 1871–1920" (PhD diss., Bilkent University, 2007), Appendix; *Anniversary Year 50: 1907–1957, Catholic Churches of Monongah, West Virginia* (Copyright by Rev. E. Briggs, 1957); Gina Martino Dahlia, "The Monongah Heroine," accessed May 30, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kb7vk-KDg-w>; "Final Narrative Report, Appalachian Teaching Project," accessed May 30, 2013, <http://www.etsu.edu/cass/projects/documents/2010/Fairmont.pdf>; "The Daily Beast," accessed May 30, 2013, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/galleries/2010/04/06/mining-disasters-and-rescues.html#slide1>; "Robert Plays Monongah," accessed May 30, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeMN99DXPI4>; "Monongah play to open WVPT season," *Times West Virginian*, December 27, 2012, 1C; Kate Thomas ballet posting, accessed May 30, 2013, <http://www.italiangenealogy.com/forum/topic3734.html>.
- 4 The West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University (WVRC) holds the records of the Monongah Mines Relief Committee (MMRC), which contains the final report of the MMRC (Box 1), files on the

deceased miners (Boxes 2-13), and correspondence, notes, and documentation related to the explosions (Boxes 14-15); in addition, there are two storage boxes. Documentation for the article was gathered from the latter four boxes, unless the file of a miner is identified.

- 5 Joseph L. Tropea, "Hero Fund Records of Disaster Aid in Current Research on Its Victims," *impULSE*, Issue 12 (December 2007): 11–12.
- 6 Mary Elizabeth Brown, *The Scalabrinians in North America, 1887–1934* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1996). The Center for Migration Studies (CMS) contains numerous files on the Monongah Catholic Churches, parishioners, and priests.
- 7 "Subscription List Italian Church, July 18, 1906," CMS. Miners' names, sent from the company to the church, remained uncorrected. The priest was from north Italy while over 98 percent of the Italian miners who died were from south Italy; problems in understanding dialects were no small matter.
- 8 Initial visits to the *comuni* were made and interviews conducted in academic year, 1983–84; many other visits followed over the course of the years.
- 9 MMRC, Harris file.
- 10 Monongah Mines Relief Committee, *History of the Monongah Mines Relief Fund: In Aid of Sufferers from the Monongah Mine Explosion, Monongah, West Virginia, December 6, 1907* (Fairmont, WV: Monongah Mines Relief Committee, 1910), 22.
- 11 W. H. Moore, *The Evening Times* (Cumberland, MD), December 13, 1907, 1.
- 12 "Subscription," CMS. Only 28 of the 171 Italians who died were with their wives, living in Monongah.
- 13 United States Mine Safety and Health Administration, which cites over 1,000 widows and children, accessed May 30, 2013, <http://www.msha.gov/DISASTER/MONONGAH/MONON16.asp>.
- 14 Carnegie Hero Fund Commission Records, File No. 2089, including Wilmot's report in "Minutes of Special Meeting," December 23, 1907.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 MMRC. Auditor's letter, December 28, 1908.
- 18 Davitt McAteer, *Monongah: The Tragic Story of the Worst Industrial Accident in US History* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2007), 218, 219, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 233, 236, 237, 239, 241; Joseph D'Andrea, *Monongah: Cent'Anni Di Oblío* (Isernia: Cosmo Iannone Editore, 2007), 378–410.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, December 8, 1907 and December 9, 1907.
- 21 Tropea, "Revisiting Monongah."

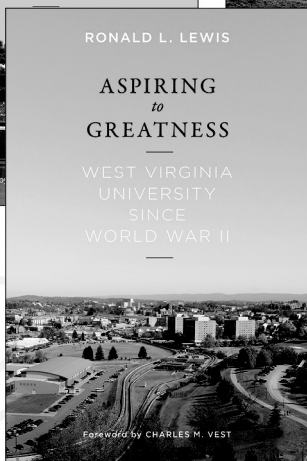
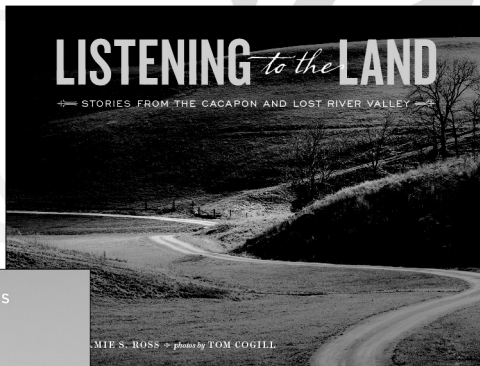
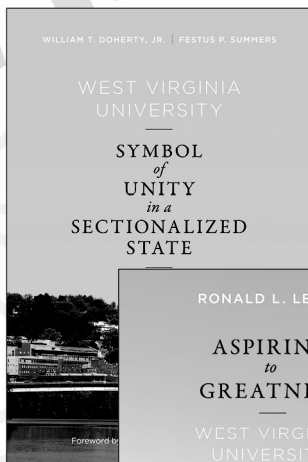
- 22 E. R. Briggs, "Monongah Mine Disaster Interim Report," unpublished and undated working paper.
- 23 WVRHC, Oral History Collection #103, Part 1. The range of coal-mining companies discussed may have confused the subject's recall and his testimony shows inconsistency about Fairmont Coal's payroll practices. Still, a retired miner, "Felix Gabriel," recognized that payroll procedures could preempt "off-the-books" cases (see the end of Part 1).
- 24 *Monongah Mine Explosion, Hearings*, 396.
- 25 Ibid., 296; McAteer, *Monongah*, 219–220.
- 26 MMRC; see forms and correspondence in files number 132 and 257.
- 27 Russell F. Bonasso, *Fire in the Hole* (Russell F. Bonasso: Fairmont, WV, 2003) is the source of the 956 figure, which is repeated in the United States in "The Daily Beast" (note 3) and in Italy in Luigi Calabrese's website, accessed May 30, 2013, <http://luigicalabrese1.blogspot.com/2012/12/campobasso-monongah-dal-fatto-al-simbolo.html>. The original source, a "Washington dispatch," could not be found.
- 28 See for example, op. cit., *The New York Times*, December 8, 1907, 16; op. cit., *Los Angeles Herald*, December 8, 1907, 1; "Death List Grows in Great Mine Horror," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 8, 1907, 1. See note 29, below, for an example.
- 29 Ibid., *New York Times*, December 8, 1907.
- 30 MMRC, home canvass filed in later boxes, following boxes containing the miners' files; Dan Colanero, interview with the author, Spring 1981; Matt Witt, "It's in Our Blood," *United Mine Workers Journal* 86th Year, no. 16 (September 1975): 10.
- 31 Quotes and distinctions in this sentence are gratefully owed to "Reviewer 1" of the article.
- 32 MMRC, in later boxes, following boxes containing the miners' files.
- 33 "Fatal Accidents," *West Virginia Mine Inspector, Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30th, 1908* (Charleston, WV: Union Publishing Co., 1908), 216–225.
- 34 "Summaries of Italian miners' who had families in Italy or Monongah," CMS.
- 35 MMRC. The canvass of the homes recorded information on the miners' dependents.
- 36 MMRC, canvass worksheet, house no. 210.
- 37 September 16, 2012, Monongah power point presentation, Holy Spirit Church hall.
- 38 McAteer, *Monongah*, 222, 227, 228, 236, 239, 240.
- 39 Ibid., 228.
- 40 Ibid., 317; *History of the Monongah Mines Relief Fund*, 317.
- 41 McAteer, *Monongah*, 236.

- 42 George Korson, *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943), 146.
- 43 Op. cit., *Centennial Remembrance*, cover.
- 44 Urban died in a mine accident in 1926.
- 45 The road sign can be viewed at the town hall in Monongah and in publications such as Norberto Lombardi, *Monongah 1907: Una Tragedia Dimenticata* (Rome: Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 1907), 23 and D'Andrea, *Monongah*, 361, or on the internet by searching "Monongah Disaster" in Google images.
- 46 *Monongah Mine Explosion, Hearings*, 240–49, 265–67.
- 47 Ibid., 241.
- 48 Carnegie Hero Fund, DeShield's letter.
- 49 *History of the Monongah Mines Relief Fund*, 33.
- 50 *Monongah Mine Explosion, Hearings*, 240–49.
- 51 Ibid., 265, 832. "Rosebeig" appears in the index (832) and in text, "Testimony of Peter Rosebeig," 265. However, when the witness Rosebeig was asked his name, he responded, "Peter Urban," 265.
- 52 MMRC, Patch file, Number 255. However, the grave map identifies a "Nicola (sic) Pirocco" in this site.
- 53 MMRC, copies of signatures in miners' files.
- 54 MMRC, copies of financial instrument in miners' files if their dependents were in Italy.
- 55 Carmine Prozillo, interview with the author, Spring 1984, Morcone, Italy. Carmine told the story of receiving a cow about two decades after his portion of the MMRC monies would have been deposited in the bank (194 dollars total).
- 56 MMRC, Feola file; Maria Concetta (Feola's daughter) and Filomena Sandolo (Ponza resident), interview with the author, Spring 1984.
- 57 *Annual Report (19th), Coal Mines in the State of West Virginia, U.S.A. for the Year Ending June 30th 1901* (Charleston, WV: The Tribune Co., 1901), 96–101.
- 58 Ibid., 101.
- 59 MMRC, DiSipio file, number 256.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Linda Lopez Gandy, telephone interviews with the author, Sept.–Dec. 2012. Linda, Sam's sister, believed her mother thought the tombstone was broken and that the family did not understand the engraving on the Ruggero gravestone.
- 62 "Fatal Accidents," *West Virginia Mine Inspector, Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30th, 1907*, 34.
- 63 Birth certificate provided the author by Clerk's Office of the County Commission of Marion County, West Virginia, 1984.
- 64 John DeMary, interviews with the author, Spring 2007 and Spring 2012; Joseph L. Tropea, "From Mountain to Mine to Factory to University," in

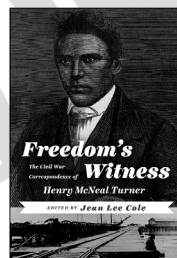
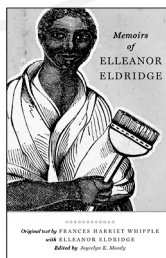
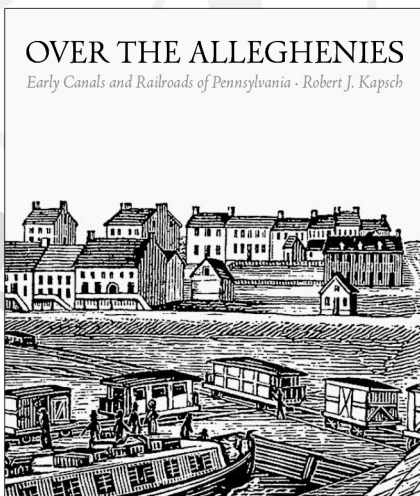
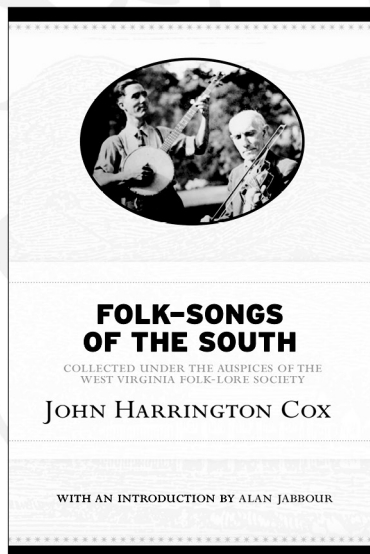
Origins and Transitions: Towards a Plural Citizenship, ed. Mario Aldo Toscano (Napoli & Los Angeles: Ipemedium, 1996), 142.

- 65 Tropea, "From Mountain to Mine to Factory to University," 142–143.
- 66 See note 3.
- 67 Information provided by Janet Salvati, long-time resident of the Monongah-Fairmont area, who was present at the church when Father Briggs arrived in Monongah on December 16, 1956.
- 68 House Concurrent Resolution No. 40 by Delegates Manchin, Caputo, Prunty, and Coleman. Introduced February 21, 2002; referred to the Committee on Rules.
- 69 Briggs, working paper. Father Briggs provided the author with his working paper in which he uses an unorthodox and questionable methodology for establishing validity: averaging multiple claims, including his own, to establish the number of miners who died.
- 70 A series of articles commenced in *Gente d'Italia* in 2003.
- 71 Tropea, "Catterina DeCarlo Davia—A West Virginia Donkey," 374.
- 72 MMRC, rescuer's worksheet in the latter boxes. This worksheet shows mainly Americans entering and exiting the mines, with one exception, Pasquale Pasquale. The Italian was likely not a designated rescuer but a desperate and persistent man trying to find his brother, Antonio, who died in the mines.
- 73 Paul U. Kellogg, "Monongah," *Charities and the Commons* XIX, no. 1–26 (1907–1908): 1315–17.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 1318–20.
- 75 Frank Haas, *The Explosion at Monongah Mines Fairmont Coal Company*, Supplementing Annual Report of Operations 1907 (Fairmont, West Virginia: December 20 1908). Fairmont Coal Co. Bulletin No. 11, 18–19.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 77 Lombardi, *Monongah 1907*. As a minor example, a contributing author identifies the time of the explosions as occurring in *pomeriggio* (afternoon), 39.
- 78 Debra Minor Wilson, "More Than 100 Years After the Tragedy, Joseph D'Andrea on a Mission to Honor Miners Killed," *The Times West Virginian*, December 6, 2011, <http://timeswv.com/local/x1612760865/More-than-100-years-after-tragedy-Joseph-D-Andrea-on-mission-to-honor-miners-killed>; also, see note 27.
- 79 Calabrese's website.
- 80 "Evidence Challenges Long-held Beliefs About Mine Disaster," *Times West Virginian*, October 4, 2012, 5A. This article is a summary of Tropea's September 16, 2012 presentation; see note 37.
- 81 Giovanni Centrella, *Monongah*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSGltKgkbQ4>.
- 82 Senator Matthew W. Neely, *Congressional Record*, Senate, May 7, 1952, 4882.

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY PRESS



**NEW
BOOKS
FALL
2013**



TO ORDER: GO ONLINE AT WVUPRESS.COM, PHONE (800) 621 2736, OR VISIT YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE.